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Promoting social integration in post-conflict situations

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Mandate

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to paragraph 15 of the annex to decision 1 adopted by the Preparatory Committee at its first session (17-29 May and 15 July 1999).[1] In that decision, it requested the Secretary-General to report on suggested means to promote social integration in the context of post-conflict situations.

II. Summary

2. The World Summit for Social Development viewed its commitment 4 on social integration in such terms as respect for diversity, non-discrimination, tolerance, pluralism, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security and participation of all people.[2] In its Programme of Action, it recognizes that translating those values and principles into living conditions is not always easy: "the pluralistic nature of most societies has at times resulted in problems for the different groups to achieve and maintain harmony and cooperation, and to have equal access to all resources in society".[3] Achieving social integration is interconnected with progress made in the other 10 commitments of the Summit, including poverty alleviation, full employment and gender equality (commitments 2, 3 and 5).

3. The term "social integration", which implies unity, is defined largely by contrasting terms of diversity and pluralism. Holding the tensions of this paradox, of simultaneous movements towards unity and diversity, is a particular challenge in post-conflict situations as well as fast-changing societies. Failure to accommodate unity and diversity in political, economic, social and cultural terms will often have preceded violent conflict, and will usually have been further exacerbated by it.

4. Operationally, achieving social integration in terms of unity with diversity will usually require (and give rise to) particular skills and conditions, such as a greater awareness and tolerance of others, capacities for negotiating differences and change, institutions to sustain the tensions between integration and diversification and a range of practical opportunities for polarized groups to coexist and collaborate, and for marginalized groups to participate fully with others in the social, economic, cultural and political life of communities and countries.

5. Achieving social integration in post-conflict situations will require, in particular:

(a) Prioritizing the healing of individual and group relationships, which will include attending to traumatic stress, addressing hatred and vengeful feelings, facilitating expressions of remorse and fostering forgiveness;

(b) Designing practical projects and programmes that bring polarized groups together and integrate marginalized ones, addressing in this way the horizontal and vertical inequalities that frequently underpin violent conflict and are counted among its root causes;

(c) Promoting social dialogue as well as cultivating conflict management capabilities and institutions throughout civil society and, as relevant, within local and national government and international organizations.

6. Conflict is not always violent, nor even always a problem. It is something that occurs normally and continually throughout societies, an expression of diversity and change. It may even be a growth-producing factor when the groups in conflict are equipped with the capacity or life skills for managing and transforming it. These life skills have been relatively neglected compared with efforts to cultivate work skills, although both are needed. Where life skills are underdeveloped, and where such other factors, injustices, inequalities and unfulfilled aspirations are present, conflicts can become violent and protracted.

7. Almost a third of all countries in the world have experienced violent conflict in the past 10 years.[4] The scale and intensity of these conflicts, almost all civil wars, attest to a qualitative shift in the nature and conduct of war. A key feature is the demonization of the "enemy" community — defined in religious, ethnic, racial or regional terms — and the orchestration of vicious hate campaigns. In the process, traditional limits on the conduct of warfare, set by international instruments as well as local taboos and value systems, have been cast aside. Civilians have become the primary target, suffering trauma, injury and death, as well as the destruction of family and community life and of livelihood.

8. The legacy is widespread social breakdown, lawlessness, the proliferation of small arms and the involvement of multiple and often semi-autonomous warring groups. Crime and corruption easily take root in conditions of protracted social conflict, offering warlords opportunities to gain control of local and national economies, often supported by international criminal networks. The rise and consolidation of crime and corruption together with the spread of social chaos and the breakdown of institutions make post-war recovery particularly challenging.

9. Post-conflict recovery and transformation will span several interrelated domains — security, relief, rehabilitation and long-term development. In all these efforts, at local and national levels and in their analytic, training, conceptual, operational and policy components, social integration is best embedded rather than added on. How this is done must depend on the widely varying circumstances of post-conflict situations. The intensity of the destruction, the extent to which it had been directed against people or against property, the aspirations and expectations of the different groups and the practical opportunities for reparation and reconstruction will, among many other factors, determine how social integration can be achieved.

10. Embedding social integration in post-conflict recovery may require a deep social reconstruction of post-conflict societies and fresh approaches by many of the external donors and aid agencies. Civil society groups must be engaged in the process. And although Government is frequently weakened by protracted social conflict, its role is paramount in creating the enabling environment for social integration and will include institution-building towards social justice, conflict management, human rights, gender equality, equitable allocation of resources, augmentation of resources, capacity-building and other factors.

11. Social integration requires the collaboration of Government and civil society. It can be supported by external actors who design and implement their interventions through consultation with Government and the communities in question, viewing them as active agents of the post-conflict recovery. Often the pressure of meeting survival needs and the difficulty of understanding the conflict complexities lead external actors to overlook social integration dimensions while concentrating on technical services and provisions.

12. Many means of promoting social integration are discussed in the present report, but only a few are examined, owing to limitations of space. Section III delineates social integration measures that could be embedded in broad post-conflict processes. Subsequent sections focus briefly on the roles of civil society groups and actors (sect. IV); government (sect. V) and the international community (sect. VI). The report's scope is broad, providing an overview as well as, possibly, a foundation on which to construct a more analytic examination together with illustrative examples from recent post-conflict experiences — analyses and illustrations that could contribute to a culture and capacity for conflict prevention worldwide, even as inter-communal fault-lines appear and widen in unexpected places in all world regions.

III. Embedding social integration in post-war recovery processes

13. Post-war recovery entails transformation. The pre-war situation cannot be replicated, first, because the conflict will have irrevocably changed social relations and, second, because of a need to avoid recultivating the root causes of the conflict. Societies emerging from acute turmoil have qualitatively different needs from those of a stable society, and usually require a reordering of normal priorities and the incorporation of new ones. Post-conflict societies will themselves vary greatly, depending on the kind of damage done, the people's psychological and physical condition, the institutional capacity and credibility of Government and the role and resources that international actors bring to bear on the process. Because of the overriding need to avoid a recurrence of war and chaos, designing the transitional framework is essentially a political task. Among international actors, the Secretary-General has the key responsibility for preventive, peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts and will provide the central role in designing the post-conflict framework, in collaboration with all relevant actors, engaging thereby a wide array of expertise from all parts of the United Nations system, as well as from Governments and non-governmental organizations.

14. Recovery and transformation will need to span several interrelated domains, dovetailing security, relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction in ways that anticipate normal development activities and eventually flow back into them, once peace and the

recovery process have been consolidated. The root causes of the conflict must be identified and addressed during this process, including the causes of social disintegration, in order to avoid the pitfall of applying mere palliatives.

15. A number of social integration measures are discussed below, as relevant to different post-conflict domains, which tend to have distinct yet overlapping actors, objectives and timeframes. Embedding social integration measures in each of these domains, and applying them in a variety of situations on the ground requires particular knowledge of the conflict actors and environment.

A. Peace and security

16. Specific post-conflict peace and security measures may include short-term measures such as demobilization and disarmament of combatants, as well as lengthier processes such as reform of security forces and establishment of the rule of law, social justice and human rights. They may encompass new power-sharing arrangements. They will need to be politically acceptable, fitting cultural and historical realities, while also attempting to address the social roots of the conflict.

17. **Social integration components of political peace and security processes** may include, among others, and bearing in mind the highly sensitive nature of each post-war situation:

(a) Establishing dialogue between parties in conflict with the full participation of women and the inclusion of marginalized groups, ensuring thereby that peace arrangements and the post-war society flowing from them are inclusive and participatory;

(b) Reforming the relationship of the security forces with civil society; absorbing ex-combatants into community life and workplaces, together with the decommissioning of arms;

(c) Addressing crime, criminal networks and corruption;

(d) Addressing human rights abuses broadly, not only legally, which means grappling with past legacies, acknowledging present relationships and forging a common vision of the future;

(e) Establishing formal structures for truth and reconciliation, giving perpetrators' opportunities for expressing remorse and victims' opportunities to forgive;

(f) Securing a sustainable trade-off between reconciliation and justice.

18. Each of these measures could be examined at considerable length for its particular application in any number of different post-conflict settings. Regarding the balance between justice and reconciliation, to take one example, a society emerging from conflict has to weigh the victims' need for justice with the society's need to act as one and achieve closure. Imposed judgements could evoke further conflict. Excessive leniency could encourage people to take the law into their own hands. Trying to achieve the right balance could be time-consuming and expensive, without achieving reconciliation. Approaches should be related to the war's origins and its conduct — recognizing how historical animosities as well as the extent of war damage will condition reconciliation possibilities. Post-civil war Guatemala began the reconciliation process with a national dialogue among more than 100 organizations, which learned to communicate about previously shrouded issues. This dialogue was followed by efforts to identify victims' needs and to create conditions for them to pardon their aggressors. These arrangements were then institutionalized into a commission to investigate human rights violations.

B. Humanitarian relief

19. Saving lives is a primary aim of humanitarian relief, calling for rapid responses with food, water, shelter, sanitation, health and other essentials. External actors usually play a leading role, often in difficult circumstances, needing to avoid exacerbating relations between recipients by any hint of favourism, and avoiding also to treat recipients as objects rather than agents of their own lives, however severe their current limitations may be. Relief work must also strive, as much as possible, to anticipate rehabilitation and long-term development needs notably while organizing repatriation and reintegration programmes.

20. **Social integration components of humanitarian relief are mainly concerned with survival**, and include:

(a) Ensuring that vulnerable groups are reached during relief operations and that their particular needs are addressed;

(b) Providing relief in ways that avoid exacerbating inequalities or cultivating dependencies;

(c) Reinforcing relief recipients' innate capabilities for self-help (for example, through emergency employment programmes);

(d) Reuniting those members of fragmented families and communities that wish to be reunited;

(e) Exploring ways in which a percentage of relief aid for physical survival — noticeably more generous than aid for "preventive development" — could be channelled into building sustainable communities including their capabilities for conflict management and other coexistence skills.

21. In its "Peace through health" initiative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the World Health Organization (WHO) modified its customary activities to add peacemaking components. It carefully evaluated the risks of doing so. It recognized that although health and peace were interconnected, WHO staff were specialists in health, not conflict resolution. Then after careful preparation, it designed health capacity-building activities with secondary peace-building components, essentially by carefully adding to health-care training a variety of possibilities for encounters and relationship-building among individuals from the communities in conflict.[5] The organization's broad mental health intervention model for the area comprised six interrelated segments: coordination, the collection of data, community orientation, capacity-building, clinical support and care for the caretakers.

C. Rehabilitation

22. Post-conflict rehabilitation is considered to encompass broad societal reconciliation, reintegration and reconstruction, usually occurring for up to two years, aimed at restoring the minimum functioning of society. Reconciliation generally focuses on eliminating societal tensions and animosities (broader than reconciling security forces and society, mentioned in sect. A above); reintegration on achieving viable coexistence of various post-conflict groups; and reconstruction on the physical, socio-economic, administrative and legislative infrastructures. Rehabilitation, thus, is a broad term whose constituent components are mutually reinforcing, since without reconciliation among the parties, conflicts can recur to undermine investments made in reintegration and reconstruction. And without concrete improvements in living conditions and basic needs, reconciliation is unlikely to hold.

23. **Social integration components of rehabilitation, of a concrete nature,** include:

(a) Enabling ex-combatants to acquire new peacetime life and work skills, together with reintegrating them into communities, workplaces and schools;

(b) Ensuring that women who developed economic enterprises and solidarity networks during wartime can maintain them with the return of peace when traditional gender roles may otherwise re-emerge to prevent them from doing so;

(c) Enabling farmers to return to farming by providing them with tools and seeds, and by removing landmines.

24. **Components relevant to mending relationships** will encompass, among others:

(a) Bringing conflicted parties together for joint planning and the execution of projects;

(b) Capacity-building in problem solving and conflict resolution;

(c) Creating neutral spaces where real and felt injustices can be voiced, thereby facilitating expressions of remorse and forgiveness;

(d) Providing a trusted neutral moderator to move parties towards conflict management and transformation;

(e) Facilitating public roles for local peacemakers, which may include traditional elders, women's groups and religious figures;

(f) Attending to traumatic stress, which may include recovery from torture, rape, abduction, war wounds, deprivation of basic needs, loss of home, loss of loved ones, harassment, persecution, ethnic cleansing and genocide.

25. Many of the above initiatives can be consolidated in area or territorially based development schemes. The receiving community's capacity and willingness to play

host to groups being reintegrated needs careful attention and reinforcement. It can help to identify stabilizing points for launching and managing projects, such as teachers and schools, women's groups, farmers cooperatives, traditional elders and youth associations; business and worker associations, health centres, multi-ethnic project-oriented groups. When conditions are not too severe, measures may include collective planting and animal husbandry, healing rituals, music and dance and sports events. Area development can be sustained by national policies supporting decentralized development and by United Nations country teams and their thematic groups, where established. Area development schemes need to be implemented equitably across the country, so as to avoid uneven development as well as resentment by the people of neglected areas.

D. Long-term development

26. Long-term development operations will usually seek to address structural inequalities and asymmetries, particularly exclusions from wealth and power, which may have contributed to the conflict in the first place. This may require a departure from pre-conflict development strategies, particularly when they are seen to have contributed to the conflict. The negative effects of the war must be taken into account in post-conflict development strategies, including means of overcoming tensions and hatreds in order to achieve coexistence and the possibility, in time, of harmonious relationships built on the principles of social integration: participation, diversity and pluralism.

27. **Social integration components of long-term development** will include economic and social measures, which are closely, even inextricably, linked. For analytic purposes, however, they are examined separately in section IV below. Economic measures may include:

(a) Curtailing corruption and preventing the criminalization of the economy;

(b) Addressing poverty by all means possible, including land reform, vocational training, enterprise training, micro-credit, health, housing and other schemes;

(c) Launching job-creation schemes through dialogue between workers, employers and Government as a means of bringing together the parties in conflict;

(d) Creating conditions that attract domestic and foreign private investments in productive activities that emphasize employment rather than capital;

(e) Developing guiding frameworks for the business sector's role in post-conflict situations.

IV. Social groups and actors

28. Social groups relevant to post-conflict social integration that are highlighted by the Copenhagen Declaration and the Programme of Action include war victims and veterans, minorities and indigenous people and vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Civil society actors recognized by the Summit include women (commitment 5) as well as older persons, disabled persons, youth and various civil society institutions.

29. Post-conflict social integration measures pertaining to civil society groups and actors have been highlighted in section III above. A more focused look at their roles is taken here, mainly to identify potential contributions but also recognizing some risks and needs. The text is indicative but not exhaustive.

A. Major social groups

30. Major social groups examined here include victims and veterans of war; minorities and indigenous people; and disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

31. **The victims and veterans of war** are many: refugees, returnees, internally displaced persons, the war widowed and orphaned, the injured and rape victims, the dispossessed and homeless, traumatized families and communities, asylum seekers, ex-combatants and child soldiers. Each one of these will have distinctive post-conflict recovery challenges. Among children, to take one of the above, the categories of veteran and victim may tragically converge. The involvement of children up to the age of 18 in acts of extreme violence can traumatize, desensitize and predispose them to achieving ends by violent means. Girl soldiers are frequently subjected to sexual abuse and, with the return of peace, not infrequently caught up in prostitution. At a formative age, children expose to violence may forge their identities based on belligerence and fuelled by ideologies of hate. They may never learn to delay the immediate gratification of needs. Given alternatives,

children need not perpetuate these anti-social behaviours. For example, a survey of child soldiers in Liberia found that their preferred alternative to soldiering was to return to school (to which end they were given school vouchers in return for reconstruction work). Building the life and work skills of child soldiers in post-conflict situations may require special remedial classes, resilience and trauma counseling, and apprenticeships that allow them to earn some money. Their reintegration into school, work, home and community is often difficult because of the wartime experiences but also because of the loss of childhood years.

32. **Traumatic stress** among children as well as adult men and women can overwhelm, isolate and destroy belief in self and expectations of a future and undermine trust in others and belief in society. It can undermine the capacity to relate, to learn and to work. It can affect not only individuals, but families and communities. Its effects can be immediately apparent, or delayed for years, when they may erupt unexpectedly. Early recognition is critical, including recognition of the wide variation in how individuals and groups respond to extreme stress. Some manifest resilience, others do not. The choice of intervention is critical, and must be appropriate to each target audience's needs and coping mechanisms, ranging from spiritual services to scientific procedures. Family and community solidarity may be the most effective healing factor in many societies. As well, the impact of traumatic stress on United Nations mission staff needs attention. These were among the issues examined at an informal consultation, in February 2000, of the Division for Social Policy and Development and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat and a number of international experts in the area.

33. **Minorities and indigenous people** may have been caught in the conflict as identity-based groups defined as "other" because of race, ethnicity, religion, language, locality, etc. While identity-based groups usually cherish their distinctive characteristics, the same traits are often stereotyped and devalued by dominant groups as a prelude to their marginalization and exploitation. As groups (and occasionally majorities) resist such treatment, and as their aspirations rise without opportunities for satisfaction, polarization invariably ensues. Polarized groups will employ varied means for resolving their differences, including collaboration, persuasion, manipulation, coercion or violence. Conflict management training will help provide alternatives to violence and opportunities for joint participation in the design and execution of concrete projects will help consolidate non-violent relationships by bringing cross-conflict parties together in mutually beneficial enterprises where getting to know each other is the by-product but, from a long-term perspective, a priority product of such endeavours.

34. Collaboration among cross-conflict parties needs careful design and patient implementation, as the War-torn Societies Project (WSP), launched by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development in 1994, found in its post-conflict adaptation of participatory action research. Participatory action research emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s as a means of empowering discrete social groups at the local level: peasant farmers, agricultural labourers, slum dwellers, workers and indigenous groups. WSP adapted its methodology in two notable ways. First, all the affected conflict groups were involved and, second, the scope of operation was national, not local. By trying to engage all affected actors, and by operating at the national level, WSP concentrated on mending relationships between the many divisions in post-conflict societies.

35. **Disadvantaged and vulnerable groups** do not usually share as tight a collective identity as do the identity-based groups mentioned above owing, partly, to their diffusion throughout all groups, as well as because of their customary disadvantaged positions in societies. With some exceptions, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups are more likely to be victims than perpetrators of violence; they include: the poor and migrants, as well as retrenched and unemployed workers; the chronically ill and persons with physical or mental disabilities; children, including abandoned or orphaned children and unaccompanied minors; pregnant women; the frail old and older persons; and widows without families. When primary caretakers are compelled to devote their time and energies to survival struggles, they are not always in a position to assist vulnerable groups.

36. Though classified as vulnerable, many individuals within these categories are not inherently weak so much as disadvantaged by an environment maladapted or hostile to their needs and aspirations, which conflicts further exacerbate. Post-conflict

development strategies need to remedy socially constructed disadvantages by adopting universal design. This will require combining equal opportunities for all with special opportunities for some. Special opportunities or affirmative action, if not carefully designed, can be abused by non-eligible persons, provoke a back lash by non-included groups, and even engender dependencies within the targeted populations.

37. Through its concept of "a society for all", the Social Summit gives vulnerable and disadvantaged groups a platform for action. A society for all implies inclusiveness, which can be made possible by universal design of the physical and technical as well as the socio-economic environment. In post-conflict situations, the ideal of a society for all, together with truly universal design applied to removing obstacles to participation, can guide the recovery and transformation process, even if its translation into real living conditions must be slow and incremental over the course of several generations.

B. Civil society actors and institutions

38. Citizens can help to bring about post-conflict social integration in a variety of ways, most of them customarily overlooked, although some are highly acclaimed on occasions. Their initiatives are helping to redraw established approaches to war and peace. Their initiatives for peace are not without difficulties, and may be viewed by some with distrust and suspicion. Their efforts can have positive and negative effects, which need to be examined when designing post-conflict social integration initiatives.

39. **Religious or traditional leaders** (including from indigenous and minority groups) can draw on traditional conflict management techniques for application within their own communities and sometimes across parties in conflict. Members of the diaspora can provide a war-torn country with an important source of capital, expertise, international connections and influx of new ideas and values (though their role may also be controversial when they supply arms to groups in conflict). The private sector can create a climate for peace through economic activity and support for the return of security and the rule of law (though some may work against this having established a criminalized economy that thrives on strife). The media has the capacity to provide fair and complete reports that promote dialogue and reconciliation (or, conversely, to exacerbate relations through biased and inflammatory information). The media can also provide a voice for disputants, enabling parties to learn of each others' positions, as well as a voice for the disadvantaged and for peacemakers. It can address social concerns, giving information about missing persons, landmines, health hazards and war trauma, as well as the demobilization process, peace accords and the 1949 Geneva Conventions on treatment of prisoners, wounded and civilians.

40. **Youth, elders, persons with disabilities and migrants** have particular life experiences and perspectives to bring to post-conflict social integration, notably in the rehabilitation and subsequent development periods. Youth can bring fresh energy and perspectives and, when allowed personal interaction with opposing parties, are usually quick to engage in meaningful debate and seek innovative solutions. Older persons are not necessarily wiser than others, but an accumulation of life experiences can foster depth of perception and understanding and a willingness to promote peace and serve as mediators and counselors, if given the opportunity. Persons with disabilities can act as catalysts for redefining narrow concepts of ability and normalcy and, relatedly, of human diversity together with strategies for translating this broader vision into socio-economic and physical infrastructures. Migrants usually have the experience of living simultaneously in two or more cultures, their culture of origin and that of the receiving country, and are challenged to achieve syntheses and synergies between these, just as parties in conflict must find syntheses and synergies in their opposing positions and perspectives in achieving coexistence.

41. **Women** are among the worst hit by violence. Effects of wartime rape may include psychological trauma, social ostracism and subsequent divorce and abandonment. Rape has been recognized as a heinous crime under international law, most recently in the statute of the International Criminal Court. Paradoxically, some wars may create opportunities for women to transcend traditional gender-role limitations by both allowing and compelling them to devise economic survival strategies and welfare networks which they may lose with the return of peace if that does not bring a transformation of gender role restrictions. Despite exclusion from decision-making, women are often among the first to take steps towards peace as informal negotiators, lobby groups,

campaigners and demonstrators. The Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women adopted at Beijing in 1995 calls for equal opportunity for women to participate in peace forums and activities. Women's participation in post-conflict decision-making can help lay down foundations for gender equality in all facets of social, economic and political life. Post-conflict programmes and projects for women's social integration need to be especially tailored to their capabilities and aspirations yet mainstreamed in ways that also encompass men.

42. Ultimately, the capacity to achieve peaceful rather than violent settlement of disputes depends on men and women seeing peaceful coexistence as a possibility and cultivating the skills relevant to reaching and maintaining it. This departs from many customary expectations and behaviours. It also brings into question the role that women as well as men play in socializing children, particularly boys, for coexistence. In most societies violence is culturally masculinized. Masculinities, however, are varied, dynamic and constantly changing and need not be equated with violence. Attention to gender roles stereotyping has progressed far for women but is just beginning for men. Arguably the seeds of war and peace are being sown in the identity sets being offered to boys and girls as they develop their basic orientations to conflict resolution.

43. Civil society actors can bring to post-conflict social integration a rich repertoire of life skills which, like work skills, require continual cultivation. The International Labour Organization (ILO) included a discussion on life skills in its Guidelines for Employment and Skills Training in Conflict-affected Countries (1998). Broadly speaking, life skills would include capabilities for adjusting to change, for reframing conflict and distinguishing between real needs and stated positions and for being resilient under adversity. Life skills would also include an ability to seek vital information, meet basic needs and make wise choices. In relations between conflict groups, it would mean an ability and willingness to identify common interests and forging a shared vision of the future. Life skills can be cultivated throughout traditional kin networks, schools, religious communities, work situations and in refugee and demobilization camps.

44. Potential contributions from civil society actors have been highlighted here, but not the obstacles they might face in doing so. The negative impact of certain civil society groups — violent gangs, extortionists, corrupt traders, etc., have not been examined here, but their role should be considered in a longer analysis. Civil society works best when it can work in partnership with Government, and when Government provides a fair and secure environment for its activities.

V. Role of Government

45. Government's role is paramount in achieving post-conflict social integration, in partnership with civil society. This can be difficult where Government has collapsed, or has been associated with the conflict. The restoration of good governance is a precondition to establishing social integration, including restoration of such traditional elements as rule of law, security, human rights, transparency, and legitimacy. In addition to these, social integration will require institutions that promote human dignity, equitable development, dialogue and participation, a national consensus on norms including tolerance, as well as the engagement of all actors in forging and working towards a shared vision of the future.

46. Social integration needs to be enshrined as government policy, not viewed as a by-product of other activities. And it needs to be embedded in national post-conflict technical reconstruction, administration of justice and service delivery. The Summit's Programme of Action recommended, in paragraph 73 (h) that State institutions set an example in promoting and protecting "respect for freedom of expression; democracy; political pluralism; diversity of heritage, cultures and values; religious tolerance and principles; and the national traditions on which a country has been built". As a microcosm of society, the public service should therefore reflect inclusiveness and diversity with its internal recruitment and promotion policies maintaining ethnic, regional, gender and other balance, and its external outreach of services being similarly comprehensive and equitable.

47. Crucial to social integration in war-torn societies is Government's capacity to govern diversity: that is, to manage conflicts and mediate competing interests so that social groups find peaceful channels of expressions. As well, facilitating opportunities for civil society groups to participate in reconstruction will energize them and generate new social forces for

expanding social capital and sustaining recovery into the long term.

48. Institutionalizing social integration implies, in particular, inclusive governance policies and practices that seek to reverse polarization and exclusion, thereby ending preconditions for the recurrence of violence. Achieving inclusion may take time, particularly when some groups have had little access to education, putting current generations of adults at a disadvantage in competing for decision-making positions. Creating foundations and frameworks for inclusion is more important than government attempts to replicate one particular governing model or another. Beyond that, social integration implies a deliberate effort to seek out and lay the foundations of a culture of peace.

49. Beyond these general considerations, a number of specific governmental measures can help promote social integration in post-conflict situations, adapted as necessary to each situation. These include:

(a) Ensuring the legitimacy of key governance institutions, i.e., a neutral, competent, professional civil service free from corruption and responsive to the needs of all citizens; a police force adhering to international standards of human rights; a military accountable to civilian authority; and trained and functioning judiciary free from undue influence;

(b) Formulating constitutional designs and institutional structures that foster inclusion and balanced power-sharing, together with a system of representation that safeguards minority groups and matters;

(c) Establishing administrative machinery that regulates competing interests, insulates decision-making from political pressures of dominant actors, harmonizes local and national interests, manages intra- and inter-State conflicts;

(d) Revitalizing traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms that may have broken down and creating a synthesis of these and modern mechanisms, as feasible and appropriate, including councils of elders, ombudsman institutions, mediation centres, court-annexed mediation programmes, peer mediation and public education in dispute resolution;

(e) Nurturing trust and a sense of allegiance through freedom of the press, public hearings, truth and reconciliation commissions, town hall meetings and national conferences and by revising educational curricula to reflect a country's current and historical diversity;

(f) Devising and implementing development programmes that, through their activities, promote communication, tolerance, coexistence and pluralism among previously conflicting groups;

(g) Providing gender-balanced leadership training and training for governance at the local and national levels with outreach to formerly excluded populations;

(h) Strengthening the State in various ways, including those mentioned above, for it to encourage and not be threatened by the emergence of a robust civil society.

50. In sum, post-conflict situations are difficult to govern yet offer opportunities for systematically designing inclusive and participatory structures, in place of exclusions and polarization that may have engendered the conflict and are likely also to have been exacerbated by it.

VI. International support

51. External actors contribute major financial resources and specialized expertise to help mend war-torn societies. Their involvement also brings risks. Their first crucial role is often to help end armed conflict. This may involve arranging a political truce, re-drawing socio-political structures, and shaping post-war reconstruction priorities. Clearly, in all of these tasks, external actors can be influential in promoting social integration, provided their activities are sensitive to national needs, realities, capabilities and aspirations.

52. External actors and activities in post-conflict recovery are too numerous to list here. Establishing cohesion and coordination among them is always a challenge. In his 1997 United Nations reform package (see A/52/1, para. 124), the Secretary-General indicated that the Department of Political Affairs, in its capacity as current convenor of the Executive Committee on Peace and Security, would be the focal point within the United Nations for post-conflict peace-building. The Executive Committee on Peace and Security, in collaboration with other executive committees as appropriate, would be responsible for the design and implementation of post-conflict peace-building initiatives, including the definition of objectives, criteria and operational guidelines for post-

conflict peace-building by the organizations of the United Nations system.

53. In the immediate post-conflict situation, the prime coordinating role often lies with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat. Depending on the circumstances, major coordinating roles may also be played by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) or the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In varying ways, other United Nations entities may be engaged in the post-conflict process, including the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights, the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons. The World Bank is supporting post-conflict reconstruction in many places. Several of the specialized agencies are also very active, but only a few of their initiatives are mentioned in this report because of space limitations.

54. Social integration is promoted by many United Nations entities and, in particular, by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, through its Division for Social Policy and Development. The Department aims to strengthen social integration by various means, including by promoting common norms and developing policies, programmes and cooperative actions.

55. Social integration can be guided by many United Nations instruments, including the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which highlight the rights of individuals. Minorities' rights are upheld in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and are further elaborated by the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities; by the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and by the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion or Belief. The rights of women and children are upheld in, respectively, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The status of persons with disabilities is addressed in the Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons, and in the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons. The status of older persons is upheld by United Nations Principles for Older Persons, together with general comment No. 6 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In addition, ILO and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have adopted instruments supporting equality for individuals and groups in work and education.

56. Post-conflict needs invariably bring about a convergence of rights, development and peace-oriented actions. Post-conflict peace-building was among the concerns raised in the Security Council during its unprecedented "Month of Africa" (January 2000) debate which examined the impact of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) on peace and security in Africa and addressed the prevalence and recurrence of conflicts including, in particular, the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which could be characterized as a combination of "pre, during and post" conflict situations presenting daunting social integration challenges.

57. Generating political will, resources, collaboration and cohesion is a continuing challenge to external actors in post-conflict situations. And although the role of external actors in supporting post-conflict social integration is great, as indicated in section III above, they may also delay or derail integrating because of: (a) varying or even contradictory agendas and approaches among aid agencies, causing division or confusion among targeted groups; (b) applying aid with insufficient attention to its peace-promoting or conflict-inducing impact; (c) failing to foster timely local ownership and control of the recovery process; (d) inattention to conflicting perceptions between donor and recipients, even regarding such basic concepts as self-reliance and partnership; and (e) inflated expectations generated by political rhetoric intended to buy temporary peace or placate selected groups or by temporary emergency measures that cannot be sustained.

58. In view of the complexities of social integration, external actors often shy away from supporting it in favour of technical exercises. Unresolved, however, the human conflicts tend to resurface and undermine technical reconstruction. Ultimately, the root social causes of conflict need to be addressed. The international community has a wealth of capabilities to bring to bear on rebuilding, which can be further

cultivated to become more closely attuned to the needs of post-conflict societies. The continuing challenge is:

(a) To respond urgently, flexibly and pragmatically in ways that do not exacerbate tensions. This may require a downward transfer of authority from headquarters to the field, as well as special budgetary reserves;

(b) To listen, discuss, facilitate and empower more. These somewhat intangible human factors are often overlooked because of emergency survival needs as well as donor demands for concrete outputs and measurable results;

(c) To better understand local and national actors, forces and dynamics and embed this understanding in policy and programmes;

(d) To adapt external assistance to local socio-political realities, which usually have a different logic from those prevailing at Headquarters;

(e) To transfer power and ownership to local actors, which means accepting the implications this may have in terms of redefined objectives and priorities;

(f) To adjust customary evaluation criteria, such as definite time-frames and tangible products, recognizing that the indirect impact of assistance on relationships often counts more than the immediate objectives pursued, and that influencing the way people see themselves and each other and their authorities and institutions can be more important than technical results;

(g) To assess and conduct research, such as assessments on the impact of conflict, participatory action research and gender analysis of post-conflict recovery and rebuilding;

(h) To support countries in strengthening their governance capacities to analyse problems and conflicts, and in strategizing their own solution;

(i) To wait and watch (which presumes exceptional sensitivity on the part of decision makers in the field and at headquarters) the evolving political and societal dynamics and to allow flexibility in timetables and rebuilding plans.

59. With the above risks and capabilities in mind, guiding principles of social integration for international actors might stipulate that interventions be, among others:

(a) Situation appropriate, adapted to each post-conflict situation;

(b) Culturally sensitive and nationally owned;

(c) Consultative and inclusive of all affected actors (in varying but comparable ways);

(d) Appropriately timed, targeted and guided by a "do-no-harm" principle;

(e) Practical and concrete, providing opportunities for conflicting parties to work together;

(f) Embedded in existing external frameworks that themselves are flexible, coherent and comprehensive in their conceptual and operational approach.

60. Beyond post-conflict situations, social integration may also be embedded in such broad measures as the Millennium Assembly and Forum, the International Year for the Culture of Peace, 2000, the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, 2001, the World Conference against Racism and Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, 2001, the Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice for the Twenty-first Century and other such initiatives. Any one of these current initiatives would provide a suitable platform for developing a framework for living with unity and diversity in the twenty-first century, encompassing the necessary institutions, knowledge, values and life skills.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

61. Writing five years after the event, the independent commission appointed by the Secretary-General to inquire into the actions of the United Nations during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda (S/1999/1257) noted, among its final observations, that the aftermath of the genocide was still a reality — in the pain of those who had lost loved ones, in the efforts to build reconciliation between Rwandans, in the challenges of bringing those responsible to justice and in the continued problems of displacement as well as in the efforts to find ways to balance the needs and interests of those who had survived the genocide within Rwanda and those returning from lives as refugees abroad. The commission stated that the challenges of

the future were ones where the United Nations could help Rwanda to rebuild and reconcile.

62. The focus of the present report has been on rebuilding the social fabric and on reconciling polarized groups — essential components of social integration — which are continuing challenges in South Africa, Guatemala, East Timor, the former Yugoslavia and Northern Ireland to name a few post-conflict situations (at the time of writing). All social integration measures must be tailored to meet each situation's particular circumstances, including the spiralling nature of many protracted conflicts where pre, during and post-conflict situations roll into one another.

63. Recommendations for promoting social integration in post-conflict situations encompassing the four main areas of the present report — post-conflict processes, together with capacity-building within civil society, Government and international actors — include immediate attention to the following:

(a) Embedding social integration in post-conflict recovery processes by further developing culturally and gender-sensitive tools (research, training, guidelines) based on analysis of recent experiences encompassing questions of resilience, traumatic stress, forgiveness and other related matters. Immediate measures should include:

(i) Distilling lessons learned from recent United Nations and other experiences in post-conflict situations that could help to understand and support social integration in terms of sustaining unity in diversity;

(ii) Developing policy and intervention guidelines for assessing and responding to the impact of traumatic stress on individuals, families and communities in countries with varying needs, as well as for United Nations personnel in the field;

(iii) Devising nationally coordinated area or territorial development schemes that achieve integration of war veterans and victims, and of traditionally polarized and marginalized groups;

(b) Facilitating civil society's capabilities for living with unity in diversity, including essential life skills, business sector frameworks, media roles and consensus-forming participatory action research, specifically by:

(i) Elaborating a basic repertoire of life skills (such as dialogue and resilience) needed for social integration in pluralistic societies and exploring their application in communities, workplaces, schools and religious institutions;

(ii) Devising a framework for the private sector's social integration role in post-conflict situations, delineating possible resources, rewards, risks and benefits for both businesses and local communities;

(iii) Clarifying the wide range of media roles in post-conflict situations, including dissemination of practical information and balanced discussion of conflicting views, on the one hand, and inflammatory reporting, on the other;

(iv) Adapting participatory action research as a tool for developing consensus, setting goals and securing practical collaboration between and among conflicted parties, and also between Government and civil society;

(c) Strengthening national capacities for providing an enabling environment for social integration at the local and national levels, by establishing or strengthening:

(i) Institutions that foster rule of law and social justice, including an impartial judiciary, reconciliation commissions, ombudsman's offices, electoral commissions, national conferences/*observatoires* and human rights commissions;

(ii) Institutions and programmes that create opportunities for dialogue, such as mediation centres, peer mediation and educational programmes in conflict management;

(iii) Varied power-sharing arrangements fostering allegiance and nation-building that are inclusive, consensual and participatory;

(iv) Development initiatives that have mainstreamed the cultivation and practice of conflict-resolution, collaboration and coexisting attitudes and skills;

(d) Enhancing the international community's awareness of social integration throughout its analyses, research, training, information exchange and operational activities pertaining to latent and manifest

conflict situations, specifically, by crafting interventions that:

(i) Foster local ownership and control over the recovery process;

(ii) Are sensitive to their impact on the peace/conflict environment;

(iii) Are responsive to the psycho-social and cultural dimensions of post-conflict and post-trauma recovery;

(iv) Encourage the international community to incorporate social integration aspects into broader post-conflict, peace-building strategies developed in the peace and security area of the United Nations. The executive committees of the Secretary-General should undertake the necessary groundwork for this goal according to their established distribution of labour.

64. In sum, the present report has presented a broad canvas of measures, and a central message. Its message pertains to the importance of achieving unity with diversity, by cultivating tolerance and trust in post-conflict situations, as well as participation and pluralism, terms used by the Summit to define social integration. Prior to the first session of the Preparatory Committee, this understanding of social integration had been relatively neglected since the Summit. Most countries have approached the question of social integration in terms of service provision, a topic closely related to poverty alleviation; or in terms of employment provision. Poverty alleviation and employment may be seen as preconditions and consequences of social integration. Yet, social integration is also a distinct area requiring clearly defined operational strategies. In post-conflict situations such strategies would include: (a) reconciliation and healing of traumatic stress; (b) practical experiences in cooperation for parties in conflict; and (c) cultivation of life skills or capabilities for living with diversity.

65. The social integration delineated in the Summit's Declaration and Programme of Action supports neither forced conformity nor unbridled diversity. It encourages a convergence or accommodation between them. Unity of values, principles, aspirations and lifestyles can provide coherence, solidarity and strength. Diversity of these factors can broaden understanding and foster innovation. Each has its merits; achieving their synthesis is the challenge. Unity without diversity can degenerate into coercion and ultimately civil strife, just as diversity without an underlying unity can lead to strife and sometimes secession.

66. In operational terms, achieving social integration calls for a holistic and a systems perspective on society, one that seeks to understand the interrelationship of many players and processes. Where biased perspectives of one sort or another have dominated, the transition to an integrated way of functioning will have many steps, including both the deconstruction and reconstruction of society along conceptual, emotional and organizational lines.

67. The intersection of social integration and post-conflict reconstruction is both broad and deep. Social integration provides a particular approach to post-conflict reconstruction. Post-conflict situations provide opportunities for better understanding the dynamics of social disintegration from which to learn the skills of integration, which are valuable tools for a time of rapid and unprecedented global change that is generating continuing need for negotiating the processes of social integration in peaceful as well as post-conflict situations.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 45* (A/54/45), para. 72.

[2] See *Report of the World Summit for Social Development*, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I, para. 29.

[3] Ibid., annex II, para. 66.

[4] "Rebuilding after war, Lessons from the War-torn Societies Project", 1999.

[5] World Health Regional Office for Europe case study, "Peace through health programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina", September 1998.